HARAMBEE

FLAME!

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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HARAMBEE AFRIKAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION CREED

Together we seek to know that which is us, to expand our collective consciousness of who we are and whence we come. We exalt in the fact that Afrikans are beautiful in our own right rather than at the expense of any other ethnic group. And in the true spirit of the Swahili word, "harambee," we promote the idea that cultural exchange is germane to human growth.

EDITORIAL

Every Wednesday, the van pulls up to the administration building to unload the new batch of prisoners. And every Wednesday, a group of prisoners streams up to the building to see who the new dudes are. There are almost always Africans getting out of the van and always Africans in the stream of welcoming-committee members. It's like a highschool reunion, dudes being happy to see their homeys. Many have gotten out of the van twice or three times or four times; some, more than that. You ask them why they've come back and you get an answer like, "I just came back to check on you." You don't take the answer seriously because you know that there is a U.S. postal service.

You understand the pressures on African men trying to make it in racist, materialist U.S. You know that the employment picture is an ugly one and that, even when a Brother does have a job, it is often one paying minimum wage or just barely more than minimum wage. You understand how strong the messages are from the commercial media, telling him that he's got to have a certain kind of car, a particular brand name of clothing, etc. You are aware of the subtle and not so subtle message that the Brother's securing of these "goods" will make him a man and enable him to get over sexually. You understand how it is that a Brother, bombarded by the idea of Caucasian superiority and African inferiority, comes to see himself as having no value on his own and believes that the only value he can have is from the things he is able to acquire. So it isn't all that tough to see how it is that Brothers find their way to the van, and find their way to that disgusting vehicle time and time again.

We talk about the lack of jobs and of decent-paying jobs, of the materialist media hype and its impact on Brothers, and Sisters as well. Some of us stress the importance, insofar as employment is concerned, of government help and some of us stress doing for self, in a business sense. What we don't talk about, however, is the question of work itself. Why should African people in this country want to be employed?

Back home, in another time, we gathered grains, tubers, berries, hunted animals, cultivated soil, built and repaired our houses, constructed our pyramids, and did the other kinds of work we needed to do to survive and, indeed, to prosper. Essentially, the base of our operations was the village--the home of our extended family. We lived in communalist societies. In other words, our community was the focus of our work, not our individual selves. When we dropped sweat cutting down a tree to make a canoe or a drum or whatever, we were essentially working for ourselves, our collective selves. We worked together and derived the benefits of our work together. We felt good about the work we did and tried to do our best work because the survival and/or prosperity of our group self depended on the quality of the work we did.

But what are the fundamental circumstances under which we Africans in the Unites States of (occupied)America work? Generally speaking, we don't work(for pay) for our families, extended or otherwise, but for companies owned by those whose foreparents enslaved ours. And while we do get paid, the bulk of the benefits from our labor is received by no one we know. Generally, we have no say-so about the produce of our work, how it is to be distributed; we make no important decisions--if any decisions at all--about the directions the company we work for will take. We are

no more than prostitutes, renting out our bodies and/or minds for money.

Since the jobs we have rarelay benefit directly, or at all, ourselves or our loved ones and are boring besides, we get no pleasure from doing them. We're working for the money. And it is only the money that we get any satisfaction from--the bigger the check, the greater the satisfaction or the lesser the dissatisfaction. But whatever satisfaction we do get rapidly dissolves as we run into these constant reminders of the fact that some people in this country, who are working no harder than we are, are making money that makes ours resemble less than chump change. As we pour fries into paper bags or wash cars or sell insurance or whatever it is we do, we know that someone --be he(sometimes she) a corporate executive, stock broker, big-time attorney, whatever--is pulling down a hundred or a hundred and fifty times or more what we're humping for. We know that, chances are, this someone, and his fellow someones, is going to be Caucasian. Maybe we don't know exactly how or why, but we do know we're getting the screws put to us.

Coupled with our correct recognition of the economic injustice we find ourselves on the short end of is the matter of the money itself. We can hold it in our hands, but it is abstract. On its own, it has no meaning. In a village of our ancestors, when we harvested fruits or vegetables we'd planted, we could eat the fruits or vegetables. When we pounded the bark or wove the cotton or did whatever else we did to make our clothes, we could wear the clothes. But you can't eat money or wear it. In the context of racist and capitalist U.S., money is a cold abstraction, paper printed up by one Caucasian that we hand over to another Caucasian in exchange for something we can actually use but often don't need. We like the feel of cash in our hands because it represents all the real stuff

we wish we had.

Keeping our eyes open to the operations of and in this country, we quickly learn that it's no uncommon thing for money to be valued over people's rights and needs, over personal integrity, over any number of things that ought to be of crucial importance in a society. We get the message quick--that what's happenin' is the money, not how we get it. And there is no shortage of role models in this regard. The profits of U.S. petroleum corporations were seen to be in jeopardy in the Persian Gulf and Uncle Sam went to war to protect those profits. A liquor company wants to make more millions, so it floods our communities with cheap, high-potency malt liquors and wine-coolers, no matter the numbers of us who will be destroyed in the process. Plastic surgeons decide they want bigger mansions or luxury condos, longer yachts, more lunches in Paris; so they hire advertizers to convince hundreds of thousands of girls and women that they need nose jobs, breast enlargements, hip enhancement, etc. In addition to these real-life role models, there are the ruthless tycoons of the small and big screens. There are the game shows and the lotteries: Get your American Dream instantly. No muss, no fuss.

Africans in this country don't have a lot of things. But we do have eyes and ears, and, generally, they work just fine. We have no trouble getting the message. And it may be that many of us don't place a high value on work, or at least "legit" work, precisely because we get the message. And it may be that, until we devise and employ ways of taking work for our people out of the realities of the racist and capitalist context, thus enabling us to work for the African collective self and for our benefit, we will continue to have those among us who will laugh at the idea of some work and some "precious" work ethic.

-Editor

EDITORIAL POLICY

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization(parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.), is a pan-Africanist newsletter. The FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any distinctions between African people based solely on place of birth. References in the FLAME to Africans are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter "black" or other terms designating African people. This is our practice because we do not wish to diminish the integrity and authenticity of the articles we excerpt from.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa(p.k.a. D. Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 1200 words, though longer pieces will not be automatically rejected. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. We are looking for poems which address African folks' lives, the conditions we face, and our struggles to rise above those things which hinder us. Submitted poems should not sacrifice power and beauty for the sake of uniform rhythm and/or rhyme. Send submissions to the editor c/o HARAMBEE FLAME; P.O. Box 2500; Lincoln, NE; 68542-2500.

From Other Sources

Prison Labor Makin' It, Big Time

"In 1934 President Roosevelt signed into law an enactment creating the Federal Prison Industries. This law was designed to rehabilitate and train federal prisoners preparing for their return to society and the workplace...(It is) now renamed UNICOR...

"UNICOR, since 1980, has become a sprawling industrial empire, manufacturing over 300 different products. UNICOR occupies approximately 50 factories, all provided by the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Their net profits now approach $400 million yearly...UNICOR has the authority to review all of its private sector competitions' bids that are made to the U.S. Government prior to submitting their own bid.

"While UNICOR's private sector competition must pay their employees at least minimum wage and comply with all of the burdensome federal, state and local regulations, UNICOR can *slightly* under bid its private sector competition, yet UNICOR enjoys virtually no regulatory compliance and the exclusive benefit of employing prisoners at slave wages to work in their factories and on their assembly lines.

"Over the past 12 years, hundreds of once thriving private sector businesses competing against UNICOR (for government contracts) have been driven into insolvency and bankruptcy...

"The Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Department of Justice have recently and quietly obtained for presentment to Congress a 1991 UNICOR-funded study conducted by the accounting firm of Deloitte &

Touche...

"This study will serve as the basis for a congressional request to allow UNICOR to explode their growth by teaming up in a joint venture with selected private sector contractors that supply goods and services to the government as well as the public. UNICOR would then begin supplying those goods and services to the private sector businesses who are now supplying the government and the public market place...

"The selected private sector businesses can rid themselves of the major expense of employees by subcontracting the work to UNICOR who uses non-government regulated prison slave labor..."

-from "Prison Industry Partners With Private Enterprises," pages 32 and 34, Nov. 16 THE FINAL CALL(Chicago, IL.)

African Student Attitudes Examined

"This is a longitudinal study of the political views and attitudes of 739 African-American students who attended Southern Illinois University-Carbondale(SIU) in the 1980s. The students were enrolled in Black American Studies courses in August 1984, January 1985, August 1986, September 1987, and March 1989...

"The data in this study show that there was a dramatic shift among the students toward the belief that American society is inherently unjust. In 1984 about one third(36%) of the students indicated that they more strongly agreed with the statement, 'American society is inherently unjust. Therefore, the only real alternative for Black people is a concerted effort to bring about a rad-

ical change in America' than the alternative statement which read, 'American society has its faults, but is basically just. Therefore, through a process of reforms, it can accommodate the demands of Black people for racial equality and justice'. But in 1989 the proportion who indicated that they more strongly agreed with the statement that America is inherently unjust had grown to almost two thirds...

"This shift was consistent with the change in attitudes about building a separate Black nation...the percentage of students who favored building a Black nation increased from 22% in 1984 to 34% in 1989, while those who opposed the idea dropped from 55% to 35%.

"With regard to political strategies which aim toward integration or separation, the students tended to be about evenly divided over the five year period. The students were asked to choose between the two following statements: (1)I would tend to support a political program which sought to maximize racial integration as the most viable strategy for Blacks to gain the benefits America has to offer, or (2)I would tend to support a political program which stressed Black political control in areas in which Blacks constituted a majority as the best strategy for Blacks to make gains. The percentage who chose the first alternative ranged from a low of 50% in 1985 to a high of 58% in 1986...

"The students indicated that they were moderately interested in political affairs, however, their level of political participation was lower than their level of interest. They tended to identify themselves as Democrats, while at the same time, they strongly rejected the Republican Party. However, they were somewhat open to the idea of a Black political party, and a very large majority indicated that they would support such a party if it proved to be effective. These findings suggest

that their identification with the Democratic Party was fairly weak..."

-from "The Political Views Of Black Students During The Reagan Era," pages 45-52, Summer '92 THE BLACK SCHOLAR(Oakland, CA.)

Organization for African Unity Addresses Disunity Among "Liberation" Groups In Azania

"...Frontline States are fast getting impatient with the disunity of the liberation organisations especially for the unity between PAC(Pan Africanist Congress) and ANC(African National Congress).

"They both enjoy official recognition by the Organisation of African Unity which is currently exerting pressure for the reconstruction of the Patriotic/United Front of the liberation movements.

"In fact, the OAU's Ad Hoc Committee on Southern Africa has set aside November 4th for a Summit between PAC President Clarence M. Makwetu and ANC President Nelson Mandela. Zimbabawe's President Robert Mugabe will host the meeting in Bulawayo..."

-from "Two Steps Closer To Genuine Unity," Oct. 26 SOWETAN

African Starvation: The European Factor

..."The countries of sub-Saharan Africa are deprived of the most elementary provisions for times of shortage and crop failure: food and currency reserves, reservoirs and irrigation. Ordered by the IMF(International Monetary Fund) to grow export crops instead of food in order to pay off the usurious debt, cut off by the banks and multinati-

onals from new investment, their populations have been driven down into desperate misery...

"Africa is caught in the blind alley, inherited from colonialism, of concentrating its agriculture on tropical cash crops for sale on the world market. Prices for these crops are steadily falling because of the imperialist stranglehold on the world market for tropical exports. This market is characterized by competition among many suppliers while a few giant trading companies, often having a near-monopoly, drive prices down by playing suppliers off against each other. For example, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda and the Ivory Coast all compete with each other(and with Brazil, Colombia and others) to sell coffee to a handful of companies like General Foods and Nestle.

"At the same time 90 percent of world grain exports come from North America, giving the U.S. near-monopoly control of the market for exportable grain. The hammer lock that a few U.S. trading companies have on the world market for food grains makes the 'oil cartel' pale in comparison. The result is that world food prices have steadily skyrocketed. In the decade following the mid-'70s African countries' food bill increased five-fold--and their foreign debts increased ten times...

"The imperialist powers, and their agents in the IMF and the World Bank, see to it that the semi-colonial countries increasingly concentrate on cash crops to 'export' themselves out of the debt crisis. This only pushes them further into the red. When the Sudan, in the 1970s, decided to switch over from cotton to food production in the vast, irrigated Gazeira region, the IMF and World Bank imposed a veto. As a World Bank official explained: 'Cotton definitely has an advantage in terms of efficiency of production and profit mar-

(Cont. on page 12)

HOUSE CLEANING

Lovin' me ain't easy
after lettin' myself be
used and abused by countless fools
over the cruel years of womaness.

It was more or less just logic
that drove me on when hope was gone
with friends in jail or dead
my head gone dread, my mind too.

Logic told me a change gonna come,
and it came and I became this walkin'
hellfire, sistahfire, ain't takin'
no mess from nobody fire.

So, though it ain't easy to love
a woman like me, demanding
truth, justice and equality,
no commercials, no TV,
no aerosols, no alcohol....

I think you'd better get serious
'bout it, 'cause....
I
don't
play!

Victoria Staajabu Ahmed

Staajabu lives in Sacramento, California. The above poem is from CRUCIAL COMMENTS AND VICIOUS VERSES by Staajabu and Victoire Sananaa Pratt.

gin in the short run over wheat in that area'(PBS documentary 'The Politics of Food', 6 January 1988)...

"The unchallenged dominance of the U.S. as global food supplier was achieved through a policy of massive government assistance to U.S. agriculture and forcing world grain prices down in order to 'drive out' the competition. Grain prices on the world market were kept low by 'dumping' U.S. grain at artificially low prices, by maintaining enormous unsold government grain reserves and by massive food aid(through the PL 480 program) and credits(in the 1950s, U.S. aid alone accounted for one-third of world trade in wheat)..."

-from "Imperialism Starves Africa," pages 1, 6, and 7, Oct. 16 WORKERS VANGUARD(N.Y., N.Y.)

An Indigenous Person From Here Visits Our People In The Motherland

"I was warmly received in a farming village in the forest region of Ghana, West Africa, known as Manso-Nkwanta, which is inhabited by 120 Twi-speaking Ashanti people. For the month of December, I worked with both the community and the Voluntary Workcamps Association of Ghana to help rebuild the foundation for a primary school...

"In the village, the traditional division of labour exist whereby men clear and plough the land, while women cook, clean, wash and tend to children. The women also farm and this involves seed selection, harvesting, transporting crops, processing, preservation and marketing food crops...

"During my time at Manso-Nkwanta, I stayed with the very hospitable and determined 'Queen Mother'

(Cont. on page 14)

COMMUNITY NEWS

On Thursday, October 29th, Kahil El-Zabar, an African percussionist from Chicago, performed here at the Nebraska State Prison in Lincoln before a predominantly African audience of more than a hundred prisoners. Kahil, who has studied and played music throughout the U.S., Africa, and Europe, performed on a variety of traditional African drums, the African "thumb piano," and a variety of other traditional African instruments. In addition, he played "traps"(Western drums used in African-American Classical Music/"jazz" and Western popular music).

As well as delivering a very exciting performance as a musician, Kahil spent time speaking to us about African culture and traditions and the importance of African people getting in touch with the continuity of African culture and traditions and learning about and respecting those who have carried and/or carry our traditions.

His performance was made possible through the cooperation of the Lied Center for Performing Arts, the Lincoln Arts Council. Also, the prison administration/Dept. of Corrections, along with the Lincoln Arts Council, provided funds to compensate Kahil. The performance was sponsored by the prison chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization. We consider it to be part of our job, as an organization trying to bring African cultural awareness to African prisoners here, to take advantage of every opportunity to get persons, such as Brother El-Zabar, into the institution. And we would appreciate whatever information we can get about African and Africentric artists and public speakers coming into the Omaha-Lincoln area so that we can make contact with these persons about possible appearances here.

Nana Nyarko who, like a clan mother, is well-respected by the community.

"She would often meet with the Elders and Chiefs, and there was always a steady stream of people requiring her attention on village matters. Indeed, she wielded considerable power in the community...

"I saw an old photograph of an elderly, diminutive Queen Mother named Yaa Asantewa. In 1901, when the Ashanti tradition was threatened, this 61 year old woman declared war against the British with 40,000-50,000 men under her command. The immense power of the Queen Mother, and of women's roles in general, have eroded considerably during colonial rule...

"Presently, the most common drum of the Ashanti people is the 'talking drum'. This drum not only relays current messages to the community, but during ceremonies people hear about their history, the battles they fought, what each family-clain is responsible for, and legends imbued with moral teachings. The Elders can still interpret the language of the drum...

"Today, instead of listening to the drum with the ancient voice, the young are moving towards Western television, radio and newspapers as their only sources of information. As they turn from the traditional drum, they lose the knowledge, wisdom and history passed on by their ancestors. Some have even forgotten their mother tongue..."

-from "An Indigenous People Across The Atlantic," pages 18 and 23, Fall 1992 BEEDAUD-JIMOWIN(Toronto, Ontario, Canada)

Back In Time

Some of the contradictions between the content of colonial education and the reality of Africa were really incongruous. On a hot afternoon in some African school, a class of black shining faces would listen to their geography lesson on the seasons of the year...They would learn about the Alps and the river Rhine but nothing about the Atlas mountains of North Africa or the river Zambezi. If those students were in a British colony, they would dutifully write that 'we defeated the Spanish armada in 1588'--at a time when Hawkins was stealing Africans and being knighted by Queen Elizabeth I for so doing. If they were in a French colony, they would learn that 'the Gauls, our ancestors, had blue eyes', and they would be convinced that 'Napoleon was our greatest general'--the same Napoleon who re-instituted slavery in the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, and was only prevented from doing the same in Haiti because his forces were defeated by an even greater strategist and tactician, the African, Toussaint L'Ouverture.

... As late as 1949, a Principal Education Officer in Tanganyika carefully outlined that the Africans of that colony should be bombarded in primary school with propaganda about the British royal family. 'The theme of the (British)king as a father should be stressed throughout the syllabus and mentioned in every lesson', he said. He further urged that African children should be shown numerous pictures of the English princesses and their ponies at Sandringham and Windsor Castle.

Source: HOW EUROPE UNDERDEVELOPED AFRICA by Walter Rodney

Announcements

African American Images announces publication of THE RODNEY KING REBELLION: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF RACIAL DESPAIR AND HOPE by Brenda Wall. "THE RODNEY KING REBELLION is a compelling analysis of the LosAngeles uprising written from a provocative, Africentric approach. Dr. Wall, a clinical psychologist with broad community experience, has presented(from a perspective of empowerment) the factual review of the King arrest, trial, and aftermath. In her analysis, she notes not only the uprising by the unemployed, overworked, struggling families and business owners of South Central L.A., but compares it to the uprising by African American students at Atlanta University..."

Contact African American Images
9204 Commercial Ave.
Suite 308-RF
Chicago, ILL 60617
(312) 375-9682

"It is that time of the year again! Black History Month will be in February. The Office of Multicultural Affairs is looking for interested students, faculty and staff members to participate in the planning of the month's activities...This year the focus of Black History Month will be the African American Male. We need your input, suggestions, and active participation...please call M. Moore-Richardson at 454-2248.

CAN'T JAIL THE SPIRIT: POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THE U.S.(fourth edition), containing biographies of 63 political prisoners and prisoners of war, has just been released. It is available from Editorial El Coqui; 1671 N. Claremond; Chicago, IL.; 60647.

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Thanksgiving Day literally is a holiday celebrating the beginnings of the almost total extermination of an entire race of people, commonly called "Indians," and the enslavement, continued oppression and genocide of the Afrikan by European settlers...Black People celebrating Thanksgiving Day is like the Americans celebrating the bombing of Pearl Harbor, or the so-called Jews celebrating the rise of the Third Reich, or the Palestinians celebrating the intrusion of the settler colony of Zionist Israel, or, moreover, the millions of Zulu descendants ... celebrating the establishment of the Union of south Africa(U.S.A.).

-Rev. Ishakamusa Barashango